

# News Release

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## **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announces over \$20 Million in Grants to Conserve Coastal Wetlands**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe today announced over \$20 million will be provided to 28 projects in 12 coastal states to protect, restore or enhance more than 10,000 acres of coastal wetlands and adjacent upland habitats under the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program.

State and local governments, private landowners, conservation groups and other partners will contribute over \$20 million in additional funds to these projects, which acquire, restore or enhance coastal wetlands and adjacent uplands to provide long-term conservation benefits to fish and wildlife and their habitats.

“The Fish and Wildlife Service’s Coastal Wetlands Grants provide critical funding in the effort to protect some of our most fragile and at-risk wildlife habitats, said Service Director Dan Ashe. “With rising ocean levels eating away at coastal wetlands from one side and development claiming more and more acres on the other, our coastal wetlands are being squeezed into an ever thinner sliver of land. Never before has it been so important to protect these places.”

The program, funded in part through taxes paid on equipment and fuel purchases by recreational anglers and boaters, creates significant benefits for other recreationists and the American public. The billions of dollars generated through recreational angling, boating, waterfowl hunting and bird watching benefit communities in the vicinity of wetlands restoration projects.

States and territories receiving funds are California, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Virginia and Washington. Click [here](#) for the complete list of projects funded by the 2016 grant program.

Wetlands in coastal watersheds in the United States are experiencing a net annual loss of more than 80,000 acres according to a 2013 [report](#) by the Service, highlighting the importance of coastal wetland conservation. Conservation of these habitats will not only benefit coastal wetland-dependent wildlife, but will also enhance flood protection and water quality, and provide economic and recreational benefits to anglers, boaters, hunters and wildlife watchers.

“These grants will help coastal communities create on-the-ground projects to make them more resilient and ensure the preservation of our wildlife heritage for future generations,” added Ashe.

The Service awards grants of up to \$1 million to states based on a national competition, which enables states to determine and address their highest conservation priorities in coastal areas. Since 1992, the Service has awarded over \$377 million in grants under the program.

Examples of projects receiving grants today are:

### **Heron Point Protection**

The Washington State Department of Ecology, in partnership with the Tulalip Tribe, is awarded \$63,800 to acquire a 20-acre parcel of old-growth Sitka spruce estuarine wetland in Snohomish County, Washington. Heron Point contains some of the highest quality and most intact forested wetland habitat within the Snohomish River Basin and affords natural hydrologic and ecological processes to occur through the natural ebb and flow with tides. The project area provides a haven for native birds, fish and forest biodiversity within the lower Snohomish River Basin, including a heron rookery.

### **Negwegon State Park Coastal Wetlands Project**

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is awarded \$900,000 to protect a 390.8-acre, privately owned parcel in Alpena County, Michigan on Thunder Bay. Acquisition of the property would connect two sections of Negwegon State Park and prevent fragmentation of wetlands and associated uplands, and potential subdivision and development. The property is dominated by high-quality emergent wetlands that provide important habitat for migratory and breeding birds, Lake Huron fish, amphibians and other wildlife, including the endangered Hine's-emerald dragonfly.

### **Sansavilla Acquisition - Phase 2**

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR) is awarded \$1 million to acquire and protect in perpetuity approximately 1,991 acres of diverse habitat known as Sansavilla Phase 2. The area to be protected includes tidal wetlands and adjacent uplands in the lower Altamaha River watershed. This tract is part of a larger project by GA DNR, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, and the U.S. Marine Corps to conserve 19,577 acres in the lower Altamaha River Watershed. More than 100 rare plants and animals occur here; of these 15 are federally listed as threatened or endangered, and 17 are state listed and are considered globally rare or imperiled.

### **Great Bay Estuary Harvey Forest and Wetlands Conservation Easement**

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, partnering with the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire (SELT) and the New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game (NHFG), is awarded \$1 million to acquire and protect the 1,114-acre Great Bay Estuary-Harvey Forest and Wetlands property in Epping and Nottingham Counties, New Hampshire. The property will be protected in perpetuity by a conservation easement held jointly by NHFG and SELT. The wetlands serve as important migrating, foraging and breeding habitat for fish and wildlife, and in particular for the coastal dependent bird species that use freshwater wetlands and the Great Bay Estuary.

### **Integrated Restoration in San Francisco Bay**

The California State Coastal Conservancy is awarded \$500,000 to enhance 100 acres of native habitat as part of a sustainable estuarine system that restores ecological function and is resilient to the effects of climate change. The project will protect the shoreline, minimize erosion and maintain coastal processes while protecting and enhancing habitat for fish, birds and other estuarine species, including the federally endangered California Ridgway's rail, California least tern and Pacific herring, as well as eight additional special status species, three additional fish species and nine additional coastal-dependent migratory bird species.

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program is administered by the Service and funded under provisions of the 1990 Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act. Funding is provided by Sport Fish Restoration Act revenue – money generated from an excise tax on fishing equipment, motorboat and small engine fuels.

More information is available at: <http://www.fws.gov/coastal/CoastalGrants/index.html>.

*The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov), or connect with us through any of these social media channels: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [Flickr](#).*

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